

REMARKS

Claims 24-28, 30-31, and 35-38 are the only claims pending. Claims 24, 26, 30, 31, 36, and 37 have been amended. Claims 23 and 29 have been cancelled.

Reexamination and reconsideration of the application are respectfully requested.

The Examiner rejected claims 23 and 29 under 35 U.S.C. §103 (a) as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 6,396,978 to Grann (hereinafter the Grann reference), in view of Nosu et al., U.S. Patent No. 4,244,045 (hereinafter the Nosu reference). Claims 23 and 29 have been cancelled.

In the November 2, 2004 Office Action, the Examiner allowed claims 35-38. Applicants have slightly amended claims 36 and 37 for reasons of form. The Examiner objected to claims 24-28 and 30-31 as being dependent upon rejected base claims, but indicated that such claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. By this amendment, the Applicants have rewritten in independent form, and slightly amended for reasons of clarity, claims 24, 30, and 31 in accordance with the Examiner's remarks. Applicants have slightly amended claim 26 for reasons of form. Claims 25-28 continue to depend directly or indirectly from amended independent claim 24. The Applicants believe that rewritten independent claims 24, 30, and 31, and dependent claims 25-28 are in condition for allowance.

Applicants believe that the foregoing amendment and remarks place the application in condition for allowance, and a favorable action is respectfully requested.

If for any reason the Examiner finds the application other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to call the undersigned attorney at the Los

Angeles telephone number (213) 488-7100 to discuss the steps necessary for placing the application in condition for allowance should the examiner believe that such a telephone conference would advance prosecution of the application.

Respectfully submitted,

PILLSBURY WINTHROP LLP

Date: January 31, 2005

By: 

Roger R. Wise
Registration No. 31,204
Attorney for Applicant(s)

725 South Figueroa Street, Suite 2800
Los Angeles, CA 90017-5406
Telephone: (213) 488-7100
Facsimile: (213) 629-1033